



PATENT
Docket No. 400-009

#24
Decl.
E. Foster
1/23/02

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of:

Andrea F. Bell

Entitled: UTILITY APRON

Filed: July 28, 1997

Serial No.: 08/901,713

Group Art Unit: 3728

Examiner: J. Foster

Assistant Commissioner
for Patents
U.S. PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
Washington, D.C. 20231

DECLARATION OF ANDREA F. BELL

I, ANDREA F. BELL, being over the age of 21, hereby state and declare as follows:

1. I am the sole inventor of the captioned patent application (Serial No. 08/901,713, hereinafter "the patent application"). I am responsible for the conception and development of the claimed utility apron.

2. I have read the Official Action of July 5, 2001 and each of the U.S. patent documents cited therein. I also am generally familiar with each of the Official Actions that have issued in connection with the patent application.

3. I have extensive work experience in the field of house cleaning. From about 1991 to 1996, I owned and operated Andrea Bell Cleaning, a

residential house cleaning company based in Arizona. Over that time period, Andrea Bell Cleaning employed or contracted seven to nine house cleaners at substantially all times. These house cleaners were trained by me, and worked for me as employees or independent contractors of Andrea Bell Cleaning. Over this time period, Andrea Bell Cleaning cleaned, on average, approximately 45 residences per week. In 1996, I sold Andrea Bell Cleaning.

4. I have also had extensive experience in the development and distribution of commercial products and services. While operating Andrea Bell Cleaning, all employees and independent contractors used equipment and cleaning products prepared and supplied by me in performing residential cleaning duties.

5. From 1996 to 2000, I developed the ABC METHOD® and ABC POCKETS®. ABC METHOD® is an instructional video directed to Professional cleaners, cleaning companies, and individual for cleaning their own domiciles. The ABC METHOD® teaches techniques for the professional cleaning of residences, demonstrating how to clean each room of a residence in an efficient and effective fashion.

6. ABC POCKETS® embodies the claimed product of the patent application. ABC POCKETS® was developed by me in response to my perceived deficiencies in several commercial products, most notably BUCKETEER® Tool Carrier, WORKGEAR® Bucket Organizer, SAMSONITE® and JOBBOSS®. I

believe these commercial products to be, in my opinion, the most similar commercial products to the tool holder described in the specification of U.S. Patent No. 4,993,551 to Lindsay. These commercial products were apparently designed for holding tools far below the bucket rim, and as a result have relatively stiff or rigid pockets without much flexure purposely designed to sit below the bucket rim. The rigidity and design of the pockets make these commercial products not particularly well suited to securely retain items of varying size within their pockets. In particular, I had found it difficult to insert, see, securely retain, and remove cleaning items, especially cleaning products, canisters, containers and bottles, from the pockets of these commercial items. For example, the lack of resiliency in the pocket openings often caused the pockets to either rip or collapse and disengage from its support device -- *e.g.*, bucket -- when I attempted to place or remove larger bottles into the pocket openings.

7. To overcome the problems described above in the preceding paragraph, I conceived and developed the ABC POCKETS®, which embodies the claimed invention of the present application.

8. To date, I have sold approximately 4,000 units of ABC POCKETS®. Although marketing has been directed towards consumers on such media as the QVC Home Shopping Network, I have sold ABC POCKETS® to retailers, such as Ace Hardware and Wal-Mart.

9. In or about 1999, I showed and sold ABC POCKETS® at the Sacramento Home Show and the Arizona Family Women's Expo. At each of these shows, I received very favorable complements from purchasers and potential purchasers who had unfavorable experiences with the BUCKETEER®, WORKGEAR®, SAMSONITE®, and/or JOBBOSS tool carriers and bucket organizer. Many of these purchases bought my ABC POCKETS®, despite informing me that they had found other commercial products unsatisfactory for residential and commercial cleaning operations for the same reasons described above in paragraph 6. These purchasers and potential purchasers stated that the resilient pocket openings made it easier to identify products located within the pockets and overcome the problems of the conventional tool carriers and bucket organizers.

10. My invention as presently claimed in the patent application solves all of the problems of conventional utility aprons. The Apron now conveniently holds items such as cleaning products, canisters, and bottles, and other items of various sizes for storage and organization. The design of the pockets, makes it easy for the user's hand to fit inside the pocket for placements of items into the pockets, for observation and identification of items and the pockets, and for removal of items from the pockets. The resiliency of the pocket opening allows each of these operations to be performed with significantly less risk of ripping the pocket or pocket-shell interface. Further, the resilient opening firmly grips

and holds the items. This design has the advantage over prior utility aprons in that it makes the cleaning and other items readily accessible sitting above the bucket rim while holding them securely. Further, the resilient openings make the utility apron less prone to ripping, thus achieving an unexpected advantage over the conventional tool holders and bucket organizers.

10. Based on my experience, including my encounters with persons in the industry, I believe the present invention, as it is now claimed in the patent application, and as embodied in the product, successfully solves these previously unrecognized and unmet needs.

I declare under penalty of perjury that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and correct, and that all statements made herein upon information and belief are believed to be true and correct. I acknowledge that willful false statements and the like are punishable by fine or imprisonment or both (18 U.S.C. § 1001) and may jeopardize the validity of the patent application or any patent issuing thereon.

Dated: December 14th, 2001

Respectfully submitted,



ANDREA BELL

Express Mail Label No. EV054088601US

Date of Deposit: January 7, 2002

I hereby certify that the attached Declaration of Andrea F. Bell is being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 C.F.R. § 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed Assistant Commissioner for Patents, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, P.O. Box 2327, Washington, D.C. 22202-0327.

Anne K Hoole